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Civ. Food Reg.

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WAR FOOD ADMINISTRATION  
OFFICE OF DISTRIBUTION  
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New York 7, N. Y.

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December 20, 1944

Reserve

TO: All District Representatives

FROM: J. J. Dittrick, Chief,  
Civilian Food Requirements

SUBJECT: Reasons for Having Food Distribution  
Advisory Committee Program

You will be interested in the following excerpt from a letter sent to the Southwest Region which cites valid arguments for committee program activity.

"In your letter dated November 15, 1944, transmitting narrative reports of each district, together with copies of the minutes of the Food Distribution Advisory Committee held in the Southwest Region, you stated that there was an apparent lack of planning in many of the committee meetings. However, you observed that the committee program would be developed rapidly in the Region insofar as regular meetings are concerned. We are particularly pleased to note your plans for the Chief of the Distributive Trade Section to visit each district. Since it is recognized that the committees are not yet effectively functioning in every respect, we believe it highly essential that the entire scope of the program be thoroughly analyzed with your district representatives and members of the committees in order that all concerned accurately understand the objectives, essentiality, and operation of the committees.

"We have observed that when each of the regions thoroughly presented the committee program to their representatives and to influential members of the trade, through personal contact, there was a marked improvement in individual interest and committee operation. In these sincere regional efforts to further improve already successful committee programs, this Office has rendered assistance wherever possible. For instance, we have furnished written material and sent a representative thoroughly experienced in this work, as well as public relations, to the field whose sole purpose is to render helpful counsel and organization assistance in every feasible way. To assist your district representatives and members of the trade in evaluating the committee program we would like to briefly present a few cardinal points, as we see them, as follows:

Current Committee Functions

"Since several of your committees were of the impression that their primary function was to prepare the adequacy of food report, we believe the functions of the committees should be stated.

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## 2- Reasons for Having Food Distribution Advisory Committee Program

1. To serve as a two-way avenue of information between government and industry on distribution needs. During the past decade major emphasis has been placed upon the problems of production to the almost complete exclusion of the many services which must occur between production and consumption. In the future, however, distributive industry and government must cooperate in effecting an equitable and efficient distribution of our food supplies. Such would certainly be to the mutual advantage of the trade, the government, and the human resource of the nation. The committees provide a democratic media for combined cooperative effort between the trade and government in gaining a mutual understanding of distributive problems because the trade alone or the government alone can seldom promulgate effective counter-measures. The government needs recommendations from the operating trade level to assist it in solving difficult problems, as well as machinery by which it can contact the trade in a personal manner to explain its position on specific distribution policy. By the same token the trade must have ample opportunity for placing directly before the government a miscellanea of problems for the prompt and conscientious consideration of policy determining officials.
2. To report the commodity supply position and analyze the movement of foods at the retail level. In those days of short supply and high demand it is imperative that the government have access to accurate and dependable information relative to supply and demand in order that it may be equitably determined, on a current basis, which commodities should be rationed and what the respective point values should be. This function will continue in major importance in the post-rationing period because temporary local shortages and surpluses will occur and dependable supply and demand information will be an essential prelude to effective government action. Since 1940 there has been a shift in population of at least five million persons. The possible reshift of this population will further aggravate local shortages and surpluses in the immediate post-rationing era.
3. To furnish accurate information relative to local distribution problems including shortages, maldistribution, storage, manpower and others. If it were not for committee assistance in keeping the government advised, it may not be aware that such local problems exist until it would be too late to render assistance. Also, committee members will find that many of their local problems will be solved through study and consideration during committee meetings.
4. To develop merchandising programs for plentiful foods and assist in the execution of national programs. The farmers of the nation have responded whole-heartedly

in marshalling their resources for all-out food production. It can hardly be expected that local or national surpluses of a particular commodity will not occasionally result. At such times the government must depend upon the cooperative efforts of the trade to exert unusual efforts in moving the commodity with a minimum loss. Through the committees the government possesses an efficient means for quickly reaching the trade to explain the problem and request its assistance.

#### Added Postwar Functions

"In the postwar era the committee functions will be broadened considerably and the government will have an even greater need for the assistance of the trade. In addition to the functions enumerated above, I believe we must consider the following:

1. To assist in the distribution of government-held surplus food commodities for which there is no longer any program requirement. As you know, the government has considered it necessary to acquire large inventories of food in order to meet any unforeseen circumstances which may arise during the emergency. When the emergency is past these food inventories must be disposed of as rapidly as is feasible through normal trade channels. This disposal must be carefully evaluated to guarantee a minimum of adverse effect upon the food marketing structure of the nation. The long range interests of the producers, distributive, trade, consumers and government must be carefully protected for the ultimate advantage of all. During this forthcoming period of food disposal, we hold no reservation in emphasizing the importance of the counsel and operating assistance of the committees and their influential representatives of the trade.
2. To assist in the development and administration of such programs for the distribution of surplus agricultural commodities as may be promulgated. When the current abnormal foreign food demands are decreased it most certainly will mean domestic distributive maladjustments unless prompt measures are promulgated to expand current markets and develop new ones. Again, this cannot be accomplished by the trade alone or the government alone. It must be a cooperative effort which can be effectively done through committee action.
3. To assist in the rehabilitation of the returning veteran. There is no doubt but that many of our returning veterans will desire to become established in the food industry. In order that they will invest their savings and borrowed funds intelligently they will need the frank experienced guidance of the trade. The committees offer a splendid opportunity for veterans to secure this invaluable assistance and we believe committee members will be



glad to assist veterans in their sincere efforts to intelligently establish themselves in the food industry.

#### Committee Membership

"In order that committee recommendations and other action taken will be truly representative, it is essential that important segments of the trade are not deleted from committee membership. We suggest that the membership of all committees be carefully examined and determined efforts made to organize them as nearly in accordance with paragraph 2 of Director's Memo No. 7, Revision 2, dated July 13, 1944, as local conditions permit. Three specific examples of improper committee representation in your region are the inclusion of a farm loans representative on the Pine Bluff Committee, an insurance man on the Callup Committee, and a laundryman on the Las Cruces Committee.

#### Planning and Personal Contact

"We do not believe we can over emphasize the vital importance of planning and personal contact in all phases of the committee work. In order to maintain an accurate perspective of committee work on a national basis and be of maximum service and helpfulness, representatives of this office should occasionally discuss all aspects of the work with regional and district representatives, as well as committee members themselves. Just as truly, the importance of regional representatives thoroughly discussing overall plans, objectives, manner of conducting, etc., of the committees with the district representatives cannot be minimized. Also district representatives must personally reach members of the trade in order that the trade will adequately weigh the value and scope of the committees. The committees will not function to their maximum effectiveness by remote control from this or regional offices. Finally, careful plans should be made prior to committee meetings because poorly planned and conducted meetings will accomplish little and will result in a weak evaluation of committee effectiveness by the trade. For example, it may be well for the committee chairman to invite representatives of other agencies, such as OPA, ODT, WMC, to attend committee meetings when it is known that subjects concerning their field of work will be considered.

#### Analysis of Committee Recommendations

"District representatives will find that they can answer many problems discussed by committees, which would otherwise result in recommendations, during committee meetings. They should not hesitate to render such on-the-spot explanations or interpretations wherever possible. The district representative should arrange to maintain minutes of each meeting whether formal recommendations are made or not. These minutes should indicate which committee members were present or absent, which problems had been solved during the meetings,

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as well as the formal committee recommendations, and would be transmitted promptly to the Regional office by the district representative with whatever additional information as may be pertinent. The Regional Office should promptly analyze the committee minutes to determine which recommendations may be appropriately answered by that office. Replies should be promptly prepared for each committee's minutes whether recommendations are answered or not, because stimulating replies from the Regional Office will exhibit a keen interest in the deliberations and success of the committees

"The Regional Office should prepare an overall analysis of all committee minutes which would embody those recommendations and problems not answered by the district representative or the Regional Office and for which the Regional Office desires Washington's consideration. This analysis should be transmitted to this office promptly, together with a copy of each committee's minutes and the Regional Office's reply to such minutes. In other words, this office should possess a complete history of the deliberations of each committee. This Office will prepare a thorough analysis of the recommendations from each region which will be furnished the region in sufficient time for copies to be furnished each committee when they meet the following month.

"We believe the above comments on the scope of committee objectives and functions, as well as a limited coverage of operating details, will be of assistance when discussing the entire committee program with your representatives and members of the trade."

